

Campus Education Australia (CEA) Great Barrier Reef - Ayers Rock and Rainforest Safari



Day 1: Arrival Cairns and Welcome Orientation

Welcome to the tropics! We are picked up at the Cairns International Airport and transferred to our caravan park adjacent to the lush Barron River Gorge National Park. Located only metres from a fresh water swimming lagoon, our caravan park also offers internet access, small store, sausage sizzles and a resort-style pool. **(D)**

Accommodation: Caravan Park camping

Day 2: Rainforest Skyrail Cableway, Granite Gorge & Aboriginal Culture

This morning we travel to the Skyrail Rainforest Cableway for a fantastic journey over Australia's World Heritage listed tropical rainforest canopy and deep into the forest. Spanning 7.5 kilometres over Barron Gorge National Park, the Skyrail experience includes a scenic cableway ride and stops at two rainforest mid-stations. We can descend from the cableway onto rainforest boardwalks, where interpretive information is provided through guided boardwalk tours, signage and an interpretive centre. At the end of the Skyrail lies the mountain village of Kuranda. We stroll the market place for local arts and crafts, and sample some local fare.

Next we cross into more arid outback country, where dingos and kangaroos roam freely. In the afternoon we visit Granite Gorge, where a boulder-filled canyon offers limitless opportunities to explore, and rock wallabies come out to play. Here we can hand-feed these wild but friendly creatures.

This evening in the highlands we are privileged guests at the home of the Barlows – an indigenous family of the highlands Yidinji tribe. Here we learn the significance of the boomerang and how to properly throw them. Around the fire we will eat a dinner of food prepared in a traditional way, hear stories of Yidinji culture, and listen to a demonstration of the haunting sounds of the didgeridoo—an integral part of ceremonial and spiritual life, and perhaps one of the most meaningful symbols of aboriginal Australia. **(B, L, D)**

Accommodation: Camping on the Barlow property

Day 3: Platypus Spotting, Giant Trees, Crater Lakes and Waterfalls

In the early morning we look for the unique and elusive duck-billed platypus—without question the most unique mammal on earth—in its natural habitat. Seeing a platypus in the wild is a truly fascinating experience. The unique features of the platypus (an egg-laying mammal) make it an iconic symbol of Australia. Later we pay tribute to some local high-profile residents: we take in the beauty of massive curtain fig trees, and learn how these giants straight out of *Lord of the Rings* eerily “strangle” their hosts.

Then we visit Lake Eacham, an ancient volcanic crater—or *maar*—now protected in a national park. A 3-kilometre track around the lake passes through several different upland rainforest communities, and with our guide we will look for the enchanting creatures of the rainforest like the Dainty Green Tree Frog, Bearded Water Dragon and one of the few species of marsupial active during daytime — the small musky rat-kangaroo. After our walk, we can take a plunge into the cool clear waters of the crater. Tonight we settle into our Highlands cabins next to a flowing waterfall. **(B, L, D)**

Accommodation: Dorm-style cabins

Day 4: Team-Building Games, National Park and Rainforest Waterslide

This morning we participate in fun activities designed to strengthen our sense of teamwork. We use our intellect and creativity in a raft-building exercise. Using only tyres, ropes and some plastic containers, we must work together to produce a floating raft for our team, and then successfully make our way across a pond! This is a true test of our ingenuity and is sure to produce lots of laughs.

We then descend back down the range into Wooroonooran National Park—one of the most diverse places in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and host to some of the oldest continually surviving rainforest in the world. More than 500 rainforest trees thrive here, including blackbean, milky pine, and red tulip oak. Our guide will explain our surroundings, helping us look for tree-kangaroos, listen for the call of the king parrot and kookaburra, or even taste the citrus tang of a green ant's belly. We take an easy walk through the jungle, listening for the call of the king parrot and the bowerbird and emerge at Josephine Falls, where Josephine Creek plunges down a gorgeous set of cascades. Below the falls, boulders surround a fun swimming hole and a natural water slide down a smooth sloping rock face. We return to Cairns late this afternoon. **(B, L, D)**

Accommodation: Caravan Park camping

Day 5: Free Time

Today we can explore nearby Lake Placid and the Barron River Gorge National Park or take the bus into town for free time exploring Cairns shops, attractions and gorgeous swimming lagoon at the Esplanade waterfront. **(B)**

Accommodation: Caravan Park camping

Day 6: Snorkelling at The Great Barrier Reef

No trip to Cairns is complete without a visit to the outer Great Barrier Reef—the second UNESCO World Heritage Site on our journey and easily one of the world's top natural wonders. Today we travel to the Reef at Green Island, and snorkel to our heart's content. Within reach are giant clams, angel, butterfly and parrot fish, turtles, sea stars and corals of a thousand hues. Among the 1,800 species of fish and 450 species of coral, we can expect to see Wally the giant wrasse, fan corals, sea cucumbers and just about the entire cast of "Finding Nemo". First-time snorkelers are well-looked after, and our guide will give us instruction on how to get the most out of our reef experience. On the return home, we'll keep an eye out for dolphins swimming in our wake. **(B, L)**

Accommodation: Caravan Park camping

Day 7: Aboriginal Culture Park

Within walking distance of our campground is a unique aboriginal culture park, winner of multiple tourism awards. A perfect introduction to the 40,000 year old indigenous culture, this park showcases aboriginal rituals, dance and traditional arts. We witness the telling of creation stories Dreamtime legends in a holographic theatre, listen to the haunting sounds of the didgeridoo, and learn to throw spears and boomerangs in the care of Djapukai tribal members. As a extra treat, we will get to paint our own boomerangs and take home this special souvenir with us. **(B)**

Accommodation: Caravan Park Camping

Day 8: Wildlife Sanctuary and Daintree National Park

This morning we visit a wildlife sanctuary that is a refuge for a mosaic of Australian animals such as forest dragons, emus, koalas and crocs. The sanctuary's unique design lets us walk freely among the animals, and we can quite easily interact with animals such as wallabies and kangaroos, colourful Eclectus parrots and cockatoos. Our guide will give us insight into the endangered wildlife, such as the cassowary (a giant flightless bird like the ostrich) and the tree kangaroo, which are unique to Australia's tropical north. And for those of us who have always wanted a photo with a koala – here's our chance! [*photo extra cost*].

Then we cross the Daintree river by way of car ferry and enter the Daintree, home of the magical ancient rainforest. At one hundred and thirty-five million years old, the Daintree is the oldest rainforest in the world. Approximately 430 species of birds live here, including 13 species that are found nowhere else on earth, and many of which are active only at night. Our guide will teach us more about the nocturnal animals at this significant place. Our Daintree lodge boasts an attractive swimming pool, and a superb location in the rainforest. **(B, L, D)**

Accommodation: Daintree Rainforest Cabins

Day 9: Optional Jungle Canopy Zip Line or Horse Riding and Beach Party

This morning we can explore the Daintree rainforest where we are surrounded by thick lush vegetation of jade and emerald hues and the sound of birdsong. For a challenge, we may ascend a jungle-clad trail in the heart of the rainforest to the summit of Mt. Sorrow for views out over the Coral Sea or take a dip in our favourite little-known freshwater swimming hole.

For those adventurous at heart, try the option of "jungle surfing": an exhilarating zip line ride among the tree tops. By clipping into a series of steel cables arranged in the trees, we can fly across the rainforest canopy and get a bird's eye view of the world. The longest span is over 75 metres and the platforms vary in height from 2.5 to 19.5 metres above the ground. At the highest point you fly over 22 metres above the valley, and the flight choice is yours – slow, fast, or even upside down. During this unique adventure led by naturalists and scientist guides, we keep an eye out for Boyd's Forest dragons and the brilliant blue Ulysses butterfly.

Alternatively, you can head for the hills for a morning horse ride. Perfect for absolute beginner riders through to the more experienced rider, this horse riding will take you through a variety of environments. Your horse will be hand-picked for your particular skill level, and you'll receive a safety and introductory riding lesson before heading off into "the bush". Trails meander through scenic bushland and rainforest, crossing mountain streams and out onto the spectacular Cape Tribulation Beach.

In the afternoon, we head to the beach for music, games and a BBQ cookout. This will be a fun way to end our week in the tropics before heading to the outback tomorrow. **(B, L, D)** *[Options: Jungle canopy zip line \$90; horse ride \$110]*

Accommodation: Caravan Park camping

Day 10: Fly to Ayers Rock, Swim and BBQ

This morning we fly from Cairns to Yulara/Ayers Rock in Central Australia. We will transfer to our campground to get set up and have time for a swim. This evening we have a BBQ dinner, hot showers and watch the sunset. Although tents are available, most people choose to sleep in an Aussie bush bed—also known as a swag—under the starry outback sky. **(B, L, D)**

Accommodation: Campground camping in swags

Day 11: Sunrise & Sunset at Uluru, Guided Base Walk & Culture Centre with Optional Camel Ride

This morning it's an early rise to start our exploration of the Red Centre. According to the local aboriginal people, the Anangu, the Central Australian landscape was created at the beginning of time. Uluru—"The Rock"—is one of the largest monoliths in the world and it is here that we experience its power first hand. We do a full base walk to explore the Rock's multitude of cracks and crevices, and visit the Rock's Mutijulu Waterhole. We also visit the cultural centre to understand local aboriginal law and religion (*Tjukurpa*) and understand the special connection the aboriginal people have to this sacred site.

In the afternoon, we have the option of taking a camel ride with a backdrop of Uluru and Kata-Tjuta. We learn how these magnificent creatures came to Australia, and how wild camels have affected the desert landscape.

No Uluru adventure would be complete without experiencing the famous changing colours of Uluru at sunset. With refreshing drinks and snacks at a special lookout point, we watch The Rock go ablaze with brilliant scarlets, coppers and crimsons. *[Option: camel ride; \$65 for 45 minutes or \$99 for an hour at sunset]* **(B, L, D)**

Accommodation: Campground camping in swags

Day 12: Kata – Tjuta (Olgas) & The Valley of the Winds

This morning we roll up the swags and head off to Kata Tjuta (the Olgas) for an 8 kilometre (2.5-3.5hrs) walk through the "Valley of the Winds". This is also a sacred site to the Anangu aboriginal people, and a superb gathering of red rock monoliths known as "many heads". Mysterious canyons

collect here, red rock towers overhead, and a feeling of calm pervades. Our guide teaches us about the geological and cultural significance of this place as we traverse this spectacular valley. After a stop at Kings Creek for fuel and refreshments, we travel to Kings Creek Cattle Station and our camp. Our camp has stunning views out over the George Gill Ranges and gives us the true essence of the outback. We enjoy dinner around the campfire with another night out under the stars. **(B, L, D)**

Accommodation: Campground camping in swags

Day 13: Watarrka (Kings Canyon) and Return to Yulara

In the care of our guide today we visit Watarrka (Kings Canyon) for a mind blowing 7 kilometre (3-4hrs) walk through its towering walls, crevices and plateaus. This scenic landscape of rugged ranges, rockholes and gorges acts as a refuge for many plants and animals, making the park an important conservation area and major attraction of central Australia. We visit the Amphitheatre and the beehive formations at the Lost City with a side trip into the “Garden of Eden”.

Later we make our way back to Yulara and our campground where we can have a refreshing swim and celebrate our last night together. **(B, L, D)**

Accommodation: Campground camping in swags

Day 14: Departure

Eventually all good things must come to an end. After breakfast, we transfer to the Yulara airport for our flight home. **(B)**

B= breakfast, L= lunch, D=dinner

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